

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 DHA-02 H-02 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 /035 W
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O 192154Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4016

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 8759

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PINT, VE

SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN HUMAN RIGHTS SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS

REF: STATE 176423

1. EMBASSY COMMENT FOLLOWS WITH REGARD TO DEPARTMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT FOR SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS. COMMENTS CORRESPOND TO NUMBERING OF PARAGRAPHS IN REFTEL.

2. QUOTED SENTENCE HAS CLAUSE MISSING. SENTENCE SHOULD READ: QUOTE THREE AGENTS OF THE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (DIM) WERE CONVICTED LAST YEAR OF MURDERING IN 1974 A CARACAS LAWYER WHO WAS ENGAGED IN DEFENDING A LEFTIST GROUP SUSPECTED OF BEING INVOLVED IN AN ASSASSINATION. UNQUOTE. THIS IS TRUE. THE THREE CONVICTED AGENTS ARE NOW IN PRISON. FYI: THE THREE AGENTS, ALL FORMER GUERRILLAS, MURDERED THE LAWYER AS PERSONAL VENGEANCE FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF ANOTHER DIM AGENT, ALSO AN EX-GUERRILLA, BY TERRORISTS. THEIR ACTION WAS DISOWNED BY DIM AND LED TO A GENERAL HOUSE CLEANING OF EX-GUERRILLA AGENTS ON THE ORDERS OF PRESIDENT PEREZ.

3. EMBASSY CONCURS.

4. EMBASSY CONCURS.

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5. EMBASSY CONCURS.

6. CONCERNING THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORTS CITED IN PARAGRAPHS 6 AND 7 REFTEL, EMBASSY HAS DIFFICULTY EVALUATING THE REPORTED INFORMATION WITHOUT KNOWING AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S SOURCE. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT DOUBT THAT OVER 100 PRISONERS WERE DETAINED BETWEEN 1968 AND 1973 DURING THE GOV'S PACIFICATION PROGRAM, BUT WE DO NOT AGREE THAT THEY WERE HELD FOR POLITICAL REASONS UNLESS ACTS SUCH AS MACHINE-GUNNING A MILITARY GUARD POST OR ROLLING A GRENADE UNDER A MILITARY TRUCK ARE CONSIDERED POLITICAL CRIMES. THE STATEMENT THAT MANY OF THESE PRISONERS ALLEGED SEVERE TORTURE BY BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN SECURITY AGENCIES MAY BE TRUE, BUT IT ALSO MAY NOT BE.

7. EMBASSY HAS NO INFORMATION REGARDING THE DETENTION OF TWO PEASANTS WHICH IS UNDER INVESTIGATION BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. IN RECENT YEARS PEASANTS DETAINED FOR QUESTIONING WITH REGARD TO ALLEGED COLLABORATION WITH GUERRILLA GROUPS HAVE USUALLY BEEN RELEASED WITHIN A FEW DAYS. IT IS NOT CORRECT THAT ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF OVER 100 PRISONERS DETAINED BETWEEN 1968 AND 1973 AND CHARGED WITH MILITARY REBELLION HAVE BEEN TRIED. ALL SUCH PRISONERS HAVE BEEN CHARGED AND THE MAJORITY HAVE BEEN TRIED. WE SUGGEST FINAL SENTENCE SHOULD READ: QUOTE A NUMBER OF PRISONERS SENTENCED TO LONG PRISON TERMS FOR MILITARY REBELLION WERE RELEASED IN EARLY 1975. UNQUOTE.

8. COMMENT - EMBASSY'S MAIN CONCERN IS WITH USE OF PERHAPS UNCORROBORATED INFORMATION FROM THE 1968 - 1973 PERIOD IN DEPARTMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT. WE WOULD PREFER THAT DEPARTMENT'S REPORT EMPHASIZE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S FINDING THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO ALLEGATIONS OF TORTURE OR MALTREATMENT IN VENEZUELA SINCE 1974 RATHER THAN DETAILING POSSIBLE INFRINGEMENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS PRIOR TO 1974.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, REPORTS, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976CARACA08759
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760277-1084
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760746/aaaabnqd.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 176423
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VENEZUELAN HUMAN RIGHTS SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, VE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006